

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 11-127—sHB 6434

Education Committee

**AN ACT CONCERNING NONPUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHING
EXPERIENCE AND PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION**

SUMMARY: Connecticut’s three levels of educator certification (initial, provisional, and professional) require applicants to, among other things, have certain amounts of successful teaching experience. In addition, those holding professional (highest-level) certificates must complete continuing education requirements to maintain certification and candidates for initial certificates must complete a program of student teaching under the supervision of an experienced, certified classroom teacher called a “cooperating teacher.”

This act (1) allows teachers to continue to use, or in the case of student teaching to start using, teaching experience at a State Board of Education (SBE)-approved private school to obtain Connecticut certificates; (2) requires teachers holding professional certificates who work in private schools to meet the same continuing education requirements as public school teachers; and (3) allows certified teachers working in private schools approved by the education commissioner to be cooperating teachers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2011

**§ 1 — PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND CONTINUING
EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR A PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE**

Experience

To obtain a professional educator certificate, a teacher must have from three to eight years of successful teaching experience while holding a provisional certificate. Under prior law, starting July 1, 2012, only public school teaching experience could be used to qualify for a professional certificate, although provisional certificate holders could use private school teaching experience to renew a provisional certificate. The act eliminates these restrictions and continues to allow experience at an SBE-approved private school to count towards obtaining a professional certificate.

Continuing Education

The law requires public school teachers holding professional certificates to complete 90 hours of continuing education (CEUs) every five years in order to maintain their certification. The act imposes the same CEU requirements on private school teachers holding such certificates. It requires the supervisory agent of an SBE-approved private school to determine whether its certified teachers have completed the CEU requirements and to attest that fact to the SBE, as local and regional school boards must already do.

§ 2 — STUDENT TEACHING IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Starting July 1, 2011, the act allows student teaching in private schools to count towards the preparation and eligibility requirements for an initial teaching certificate. To qualify, the student teaching must be (1) at a private school approved by SBE, (2) offered through a teacher preparation program at a higher education institution, and (3) completed through the state's cooperating teacher program.

§§ 3 & 4 — COOPERATING TEACHERS AT PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The State Department of Education's (SDE) cooperating teacher program uses experienced, certified teachers to supervise, train, and evaluate student teachers. SDE provides funds to school districts to (1) hire substitutes when cooperating teachers are released from regular classroom responsibilities to participate in the program and (2) provide professional development for cooperating teachers.

By law, cooperating teachers must be certified teachers working in public schools, private special education facilities approved by the education commissioner, or other facilities the commissioner designates. The act also allows certified teachers working in private schools to participate in the program as long as (1) they pay to participate and (2) private schools receive no state funds for cooperating teacher professional development activities. It also gives public school teachers first priority to enroll in the cooperating teacher program.

By law, local and regional boards of education designate the cooperating teachers working in public schools and the authorities that operate private special education and other designated facilities choose the cooperating teachers at those facilities. The act also allows authorities that operate private schools to designate cooperating teachers for those schools. As with other such teachers, the selections must be based primarily on classroom experience and recognized success as a teacher.

OLR Tracking: JSL:JR:JL:ts